2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

613 769 178 memory of the ancestors. These are called *salaka*[1] and are similar to those held at the end of the mourning period. They are usually held when one of the lineage members has had a dream about an ancestor. The senior members are told of this and interpret it to mean that a feast in his memory should be held. The women cook a meal of maize and relish and on an appointed day the members of the matrilineage who live within a reasonable distance gather at the village of the senior section and share the feast. During this feast Islamic texts are chanted in Arabic. It is clear that in this situation the context of the meeting is exactly the same as that of the old offerings made by the lineage leader at the shrine-tree. The common ancestor is recalled and the matrilineage by meeting reaffirms its solidarity.

The Localized Matrilineage

613 621 The matrilineage may itself be localized in the form of a hamlet or small village, as in Ali Kasunka village. It has 9 huts situated about half a mile from Chiwalo's court house in Kawinga's area. The genealogy, hut plan and census are set out in Appendix B. I summarize the genealogy here to show how the hut owners in the village are related. The village is about 300 yards across and about a quarter of a mile from the main road.

Ali Kasunka (C6),[2] the warden of the village, formerly lived in a village known by his mother's brother's name Mailo (B1). Ali Kasunka is the son of the chieftain Mpona in Kawinga's area. The village of Mailo still exists in Mpona area. Ali Kasunka and his sisters moved out of Mailo village and established a hamlet in Malemia's area near Zomba township. While they were there Ali Kasunka went to work as a domestic servant in Zomba. One day the sister of the cook in the household in which he was working came down to visit her brother. She became Ali Kasunka's second wife (he was already married to a woman from Malemia area) and lived with him in Zomba. She was the daughter of the present chief Chiwalo, and was living at her

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[1] Sundkler says that this is derived from the Arabic word *salaga* which means 'close'. Sundkler, M., on 'Ceremonial Purification among the Wayao, Nyasaland', *Man*, xxxii, 33 (June 1932), 50-3.

[2] The reference number is to assist the reader to identify the persons on the genealogy in Appendix B.

589 [illegible] of her married life begins. The man and woman live together peaceably enough as a rule, each attending to his own sphere of work. The man builds the house, the woman
592 mends the fences; she sweeps and cooks, she is the keeper of wood and drawer of water. The man hunts, fishes, makes mats, baskets, the grain store, game traps, and bark-cloth; he looks after the tobacco,[1] and makes the snuff, while his wife brews the beer. He it is who fashions the guard combs and carves the spoons, while the woman is the potter (Pl. III, 4) and pipe-maker. Together they sow and together they harvest, but to the woman falls the monotonous drudgery of pounding and sifting the corn for food.

597 The Yao have a custom like that of the Anyanja. A sister brings to the house of the newly wedded pair a log of green wood from a mlanga tree which is very hard; the log
[623] may be two feet in diameter and four feet long. Should the bride not become pregnant before it is burned away, the husband is laughed at and they may both be teased by having
[608] many logs brought to the house. A man who has no children is much despised and there is a saying, "He must have eaten some ground-nuts," punning on the word for a thick-
[637] skinned variety of ground-nut, *ntimbanchila*, a word which also means sterility. An impotent man may, with the consent of his wife, introduce some male friend into the house, any children born in consequence being claimed as the husband's. He usually chooses some friend from a distance to obviate any misunderstanding springing up between him and the wife. Two married couples may, all consenting, exchange consorts for the night, but they never live together like this for long periods.

582 There is one well-defined marriage taboo; a man may not marry a woman of his own clan. In the old days, he was also restricted to his own tribe, except in the case of slave
[641] wives and wives by capture. Since the clan is inherited from the mother,[2] a man may not marry the daughters of his maternal aunts, but he may marry his other female cousins.
[647] He may not marry two sisters nor a deceased wife's sister; neither do two brothers marry two sisters.

595 The number of wives is limited only by the husband's ability to provide for them. In addition to free wives, a man might formerly have a number of slave wives. The head wife is called *kungwi*, the other wives, *wampemba*. The word given by Macdonald, *akungwi*,[3] denoting the junior wives, is a Chinyanja word and, I think, wrongly applied.

582 It has been said that a man always marries into the village of his wife. For this reason,
[647] female children are always prized as it means an increase in the number of able-bodied men added to the village. If men were, the wife might be taken to the husband's village,
[583] as is the Anyanja practice.[4] This, of course, is true in the case of chiefs and headmen. Here, we may also note that no payment is made for the wife and no dowry is received with her.

579 To revert to betrothal, occasionally the spouses will not agree to the marriage and a
613 runaway match takes place, but in the end, the marriage is usually regularized by the spouses coming to an agreement. If, however, the woman has in the meantime become

[1] This taboo, p. 204. [2] Op. cit., p. 124. [3] Dictionary, op. cit., p. 244.

They are semi-subsistence cultivators who own no cattle and whose diet is therefore largely vegetables, viz. sorghum and maize meal with ground-nuts and beans and certain leaves together with a small quantity of cassava roots.

Marriages are connected early in life with little difficulty and ceremony. Formerly girls were espoused as mere children, and this still happens, but whether the custom is falling away or not I could not check quantitatively because the memories of the old women who had been married as children forty or fifty years ago could not be relied upon. Table I shows the ages at first marriage for a sample of 121 married women for whom this information was available.

Where marriage takes place so early we can expect that the mean age when child-bearing commences will also be early. Table II shows the median age of mothers at the birth of their first child.

TABLE II. *Age of Mother at Birth of First child*

Present age groups of mothers	Age of mother at birth of first child									Total	Median age at birth of first child
	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Over 50		
Under 30	8	46	12	12	6	2	—	—	—	74	17.9
30-40	1	14	10	2	2	1	2	2	1	35	19.8
Over 40	1	7	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	19	20.5
Total	10	67	25	16	9	5	3	3	2	128	19.1

From these two tables it is clear that nearly all women in the community are married early and that child-bearing commences very soon after marriage.

Table III shows the conjugal status of all women over the age of 15.

TABLE III. *Conjugal Status of all Women over the Age of 15*

Present age groups	Those married	Wives of			Widows	Divorcees	Total
		Monogamists	Polygamists	Labour migrants			
Under 20	19	12	3	2	—	—	21
20-30	3	21	6	2	2	1	32
30-40	1	21	10	2	2	1	37
Over 40	—	14	10	1	—	2	27
Total	23	68	29	7	4	4	117

Here we see that of all women under 21 (19), 142 (73 per cent.) are married, though only 83 (42 per cent.), i.e. the wives of monogamists, have their husbands living permanently with them. Another 40 (20 per cent.) were married to men who were married to other wives, so that while their husbands were not living with them permanently they were nevertheless with them periodically. Eighteen other women (9 per cent.) were married to men who had left to work outside the area and hence were not living with their wives at all at the time of the survey. Visits by men to places of work outside the area may last a years or more. It should

on a kinship basis, how far, you may ask, is it still an organized? Very largely. Cross-cousin marriage may be dying out and the bigger homesteads inclining to split up, but society is still fundamentally matrilineal and matrilocal. One or two examples will show in what ways it is changing and in what ways it is fairly stable.

I. An old Yao friend of mine, X, who died three years ago was the grand-mother (*ambuye*) of Y, a village of 13 huts divided in two by a government-built road. Her father was a polygamist; her husband, (dead before I knew her), had had two other wives in nearby villages; when some 12 to 15 years ago she and her family, (*mbumba*), moved here, parts of it broke away, leaving her with a much smaller homestead than that in which she grew up. Besides the abandoned hut of my dead friend X, are those of a sister, two daughters and their husbands, six nieces (the daughters of three different sisters) and their husbands, a widowed step-brother, a step-son who has brought his wife to his home probably because her brother married his sister and so lives at Y, and a "boys' hut", (really a kitchen too), in which sleep or slept the bigger sons of one of her nieces.

II. A Nyanja friend, A, five or six years ago was allowed by his parents-in-law to take his wife back to his home village. Here, therefore, contrary to matrilocal custom, he lives with his own parents; but the rest of the homestead is matrilocal. When A built his hut here there were four other huts: his parents; those of a younger sister of his mother, (*mai nsenga'mo*, "little mother"), and her husband; a girl cousin, this aunt's daughter and so called by him "sister" (*cheneni*), and his only married sister. It is still a small homestead, though another sister has since married and her husband built a hut here, and his young unmarried brothers have built their own "bachelors' hut", (*nyumata*) where they sleep with one of his nephews; it can never be large, since his parents had eight sons, who as they grow up and marry go off to their wives' homes, and only two daughters to bring them sons-